TL343

ELEVENTH CONSULTATION OF EUROPEAN EAST TIMOR SOLIDARITY GROUPS

Lisbon, 5-7 April 1991.

MINUTES

Friday 5 April

Opening Session

The meeting opened after dinner Friday evening with the introduction of participants.

This was followed by a discussion to assign priorities for the meeting, based on the documents which had prepared by the various groups.

Written reports of groups' activities over the past year were also circulated and discussed briefly.

Saturday 6 April

Morning Session

At the beginning of the session there was a moment's silence to mark the recent death of Dom Martinho Costa Lopes, former Apostolic Administrator of Dili diocese, and Abílio Araújo paid tribute to the work of Dom Martinho.

Analysis of the current situation:

The speakers from the Nationalist Convergence were Abílio Araújo (FRETILIN External Delegation) and Vicente Guterres (UDT).

Abílio Araújo:

The current situation within East Timor is "very serious". Indonesia has spread the use counter-territorial-guerrilla strategy throughout the territory thus forcing the armed resistance to adopt a mainly defensive strategy. There is however a fluid inter-penetration between the members of the "urban front" and the armed resistance. He is very worried about the tactics of the Indonesians of arresting leading figures of the underground movement and the attempted creation of double agents.

The people of East Timor look towards Portugal to improve their situation. Xanana Gusmão has written a letter to José Ramos-Horta saying that he too still sees Portugal as having an important role to play and that the statements to the contrary he made last year were as a result of wrong information which he had received. This year Abílio Araújo has noted a heightened interest in the East Timor question in Portugal and there has been a significant increase in direct contacts with FRETILIN on the part of the ruling PSD party.

FRETILIN wants a genuine consultation of the people of East Timor and will not accept any half measures. It also wants all UN resolution to be enforced and not just 37/30, the most recent.

Last year there were signs of ideological and organizational crises within the groups which comprise the NC (Nationalist Convergence) but the Solidarity Groups should continue with their work and the Timorese will resolve their own internal problems. Within East Timor there is unity behind FALINTIL.

FRETILIN is in the process of reorganization both within the territory and externally. In the long run the dismantling of the old organizational structures and the implementation of the current reorganization will lead to increased strength and effectiveness. Within East Timor, however, there is a danger that the dismantlement process may result in a short term vulnerability which can be exploited by Indonesia.

The reorganization involves the setting up of 5 FRETILIN Committees in the exterior (4 in Australia and 1 in Portugal). These elect delegates for a plenary session which is to take place in 1992. This session will elect the new members of the Central Committee. Elections already took place in March this year within the Portuguese committee and the results were to be announced during the NC anniversary celebrations later that day.

The Central Committee in the interior would be made up of elected members of the underground based in East Timor itself or within Indonesia.

Speaking of FRETILIN's aims in the diplomatic arena Abílio Araújo said that the situation was favourable for a resolution to be put to the UN General Assembly asking for the International Court of Justice to give a consultative ruling on whether the East Timorese had exercised their right to self-determination.

It would also be pushing Portugal to organize the long-mooted International Conference of Parliamentarians on the East Timor question.

The Democratic Republic of East Timor is now past history. The people of East Timor are waiting for Portugal to conclude the decolonization process.

Regarding the proposed creation of a new Catholic diocese in East Timor, FRETILIN was not against such a move as long as it was confined within the territory of East Timor and maintained the direct link with the Vatican.

Discussion:

Responding to suggestions from some groups that a publicity campaign based around Xanana and his political writings would be helpful, Abílio Araújo said that he had serious reservations about the "promotion of any one person" because this could have counter-productive consequences and could be used by the Indonesians. However, he added, this is a matter for the solidarity groups to decide for themselves. (See below for further discussion on this point)

In response to a question as to whether FRETILIN strategy had changed in view of the proposals put forward by Xanana Gusmão last year,

Abílio Araújo explained that, although the long-term goal is still the holding of a referendum and achieving self-determination, FRETILIN sees Xanana's proposals for a cease-fire and talks without preconditions as the central issue and this peace plan represents the minimum programme of FRETILIN.

Vicente Guterres:

The UDT had suffered from an "artificial crisis" during the past year but was now in the process of putting this behind it. On 11 May it will be celebrating its 17th anniversary, during the following months there will be a visit from members of the Central Committee and this will lead to a reconstitution of the statutes of foundation which is intended to resolve the internal difficulties that arose last year.

The UDT also was not in favour of the suggestion to promote the figure of Xanana and his political writings. It was however strongly in favour of the suggestions for a cease-fire and talks without preconditions put forward by Xanana and these proposals coincided with the UDT's policies of many years.

The current situation in Indonesia - Liem:

There has been a qualitative change in the position of the youngest sector of the Indonesian opposition towards the East Timor question such that it has become a central issue on its political generation. This is not the case for the two previous generations of Indonesian opposition - the older post 1945 generation is essentially nationalist in outlook and ignores the issue, while the generation that arose in the 1965-75 period tends to regard East Timor as a colony but do not see the issue as having a high political priority.

For the generation of activists which emerged during the 80s however East Timor is important because the human rights violations there have been so pronounced and because, not being particularly nationalistic, they see the issue as one of democracy and human rights. They would tend towards the position that there cannot be democracy in Indonesia without resolving the question of East Timor.

This development has been helped by the fact that there is now more information flow within Indonesia on events in East Timor, partly because of the Timorese studying at various centres and partly because of coverage in the international press.

- students at Bandung, Jakarta and other colleges have demonstrated in favour of their Timorese colleagues
- during demonstrations of the Anti-Gulf-War movement outside foreign embassies there were calls for self-determination for East Timor.
- a student opposition leader currently in jail has asked for more information on Xanana Gusmão. Xanana is seen as an important figure because he has been defying the military might of the Suharto regime for 15 years.

Meanwhile Suharto is trying to move towards more "normal

procedures" and is aiming for presidency of the Non-aligned Movement.

Discussion:

Some comparisons were drawn between present-day Indonesia and pre-1974 Portugal, where the protracted military struggle in the then colonies helped bring about the conditions for the overthrow of the fascist regime. One important difference however is that in Portugal at that time there were deep divisions within the armed forces on this issue whereas there is yet no evidence for this in Indonesia they see East Timor as a province, not a colony.

A suggestion that a book or pamphlet about Xanana and his political ideas be put together in Bahasa for distribution in Indonesia was put forward. It could be an important resource and source of inspiration for the younger members of the opposition. (Aki to follow-up).

There was a wider discussion on the wisdom of a campaign to popularize internationally both the figure of Xanana and his writings which has already been referred to above. No concensus was reached on the issue.

Representatives from some countries, including UK, Portugal and Germany saw it as a positive way to achieve wider international awareness of the situation in East Timor and it was also said that Xanana's writings showed considerable political wisdom as well as military skills.

Other groups, which included Holland and Sweden, felt that this was not the way to go forward and that within their country there would be considerable resistance to the promotion of an individual figure.

Barbedo said that he personally was very interested in writing a book on Xanana but that FRETILIN support would be essential so as to have access to the documentation needed.

It was decided that each group would do what they thought most appropriate within their own country.

Aki suggested the use of a crocodile as a symbol for East Timor.

(Note: For the sake of continuity we have also included here points raised during Sunday's sessions, dealing with this subject)

Saturday afternoon session

Strategies

Group representatives elaborated on the priorities for action for the coming year. A working group then drew these together to present a detailed working agenda for Sundays sessions.

A message of support was drafted and sent to the Celebration marking the anniversary of the founding of the Nationalist Convergence. Participants later went on to attend the celebrations which took place on the outskirts of Lisbon throughout the afternoon and evening.

This was a memorable experience for all, politically, culturally and personally.

Sunday sessions

1. UN Dept. of Public Information:

Mr Akatani outlined how it could be advantageous for the groups to be formally associated with this body as a recognised NGO through joining together to create an umbrella group. It would mean more efficient access to information on developments at the UN. He himself would be willing to serve as a base in New York for this purpose.

It was generally accepted as a useful step and decided that the Japanese Coalition will work out the structure and circulate a draft to all groups. Aki will also liaise with Bruno regarding the setting up of an analogous status link with the EEC.

"Free East Timor Coalition International" was accepted as the provisional name. Jean Inglis was suggested a a possible candidate for Chief Executive. Its formal aim will be "to work for the implementation of the UN resolutions on East Timor"

2. EEC, European Parliament:

Is it worthwhile concentrating our efforts on these bodies? EP resolutions have been strongly worded, but have no result as it has no real power. Indonesia nowadays does not worry about responding too urgently to them. MEPs positions at the EP can, however be used to bring pressure on MPs at the national parliaments - follow up at national level is very important.

There has been considerable pressure within Holland for it to leave its "neutral position" on East Timor and it might support Portugal this year.

It was also reported from Holland that an inter-group of MEPs had been working together but no formal group has been set up yet.

Linking EEC aid and human rights:

There have recently been reports that the EEC has been discussing the possibility of linking aid to Asian countries with their human rights record as already has been the practice with regard to African countries.

We should study links between the EP and other bodies; the EP has commissions on ASEAN, Japan and the ACP. We should contact our MEPs before the April ASEAN meeting.

Japan reported that the Japanese PM, Kaifu, had made public statements on linking aid and military expenditure.

The 12's statement to the UN Human Rights Commission in February had

had a big impact on Jakarta - they called in the Dutch Ambassador to complain.

We should use this in our own countries - welcome it and furnish more data.

We should include this in our statement of welcome at the beginning of the Dutch presidency in July.

Agreed: We will make use of the opportunity of issuing a statement of welcome at the beginning of each new EP presidency. The Dutch group will circulate a draft of their July statement which can then be adapted as appropriate.

3. IGGI (Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia):

Although the IGGI conference is effectively a rubber-stamping of aid decisions taken long before, it is worth contacting the country representatives beforehand and using the EEC position on linking human rights and aid to pressure their reps. However the reps are in fact government officials, sent by their foreign ministries and human rights is not on the agenda. It is important that groups write letters; they could use the Dutch group's letter as a model and add pertinent national issues.

Indonesia has become more crucial for Japanese economic interests since the Gulf War which makes lobbying more difficult. East Timor is now almost a taboo subject.

Lobbying from groups within Indonesia would probably be most useful. Infight may have lost an opportunity of influence because of its strong letter to Pronk last year. The most positive aspect of Pronk's position is that he favours working through NGOs.

4. Arms Trade:

Japan would like reports from individual countries on this and in Holland it is also currently a hot subject. Photos have shown ex-NATO armoured cars for instance. How can we prove the origins of military hardware in use in East Timor?

- ask sources within East Timor to help. Tapol has already sent a request for data.
- contact monitoring agencies, such as CHRI (?) in Sweden, for help.
- check national budgets for military aid to Indonesia.

Agreed: We will ask Juan Pardo (Spanish group) to coordinate all data we get on this. CDPM and Enrique responsible for contacting him to see if he is willing.

5. Indonesian contacts:

We can send information, East Timor News for example, to groups and individuals - Tapol can supply addresses. Universities can invite members of the opposition to speak. Would the formation of links with trade unions and labour organizations be more useful than with academic figures?

6. PET (Parliamentarians for East Timor):

Carmel and Akatani reported on the content of the meeting with de Cuellar.

In spite of considerable attempts beforehand it hadn't been possible to include in the delegation anyone from a Pacific country. Likewise there was no one from the US - we need to establish direct contact with Tony Hall.

The statement that all UN resolutions are considered to still be in force and not just 37/30 was an important new development.

Ahmed's suggestion that other means of consultation, other than a referendum, be considered was potentially dangerous. This and various other fine points had remained to be cleared up by Lord Avebury and Tapol will distribute.

Recruitment and mobilizing: we need more members from a wider number of countries. However, quality is more essential than quantity and it is important PET members raise the issue in their own country. We should use the topicality of the de Cuellar meeting to help in recruitment - either a letter from the delegation or a petition would be useful for this.

7. Drafting of letters:

A draft of a model letter to be sent to petroleum companies associated with the Timor Gap was accepted and later sent to two companies. This will be circulated for use in other countries.

A message of support for the struggle of the Kurdish people was also drafted for inclusion in our press communiqué on the following day (see annex).

A letter was also drafted and sent to the ANC, in anticipation of the forthcoming visit to Portugal by Nelson Mandela.

A letter was also sent to the newly-elected President of Cape Verde (the consultation took place in the premises of the Cape Verde Association).

8. Platform of Jurists:

Pedro Pinto Leite had sent a report to the meeting and asked for help in recruitment. Carmel mentioned some possibilities in the UK; Billy to contact Pedro suggesting Irish President Mary Robinson.

9. UN Sessions:

- Human Rights:

  Carmel reported that José Ramos-Horta had succeeded in getting a strong resolution passed at the H.R. Sub-Commission last year in unpromising circumstances. For the third year in succession, no

resolution was tabled at the HR Commission this year which may make it more difficult to get a resolution passed at this year's Sub-Commission.

- Lobbying by Timorese has been increasingly effective. The solidarity groups and Nationalist Convergence need to coordinate more beforehand.

  International press articles carry considerable weight in the run up to these meetings. The possibility of taking out an advertisement in the national press in July, detailing up to date information on human rights abuses, was considered but deemed probably too expensive.

- Decolonization Committee:

  It would be good to have more states as petitioners and to especially to have contributions from Pacific countries. The expense of going to New York is one of the problems. We should coordination before the next session to avail of the opportunity to arrange in New York a meeting of the Free East Timor Coalition, International reps.

  At Tapol's request, Susan Marks, a Cambridge jurist, has prepared a legal analysis of the parallels between the invasion of East Timor and that of Kuwait. She concludes that the two were "on a par as regards the unlawfulness of the use of force"

10. Timor Gap

What can we do? - lobby our governments to suspend dealings with the companies involved. (see also 7 above).

Yvette reported that the ICJ is likely to take up to 14 months before ruling whether it will accept the case and a further 2 years to present its decision. There is believed to exist a formal procedure whereby the parties involved cannot act pending the courts decision. It is not known if Portugal has applied for this measure - to be taken up by the CDPM with Quartim Santos.

11. GIF:

It was agreed to mount an appeal to acquire a computer, printer and communication system for the FRETILIN Information Office in Lisbon (GIF). Yvette and Aki will coordinate and circulate groups later with details.

12. Broadening our base:

- New Groups:

  Could Rev Paul Moore be asked to form a group in the US? Rev Paul Reeves is also a possible figure to approach.

  There is a new Norwegian group. The Austrian group has dissolved as a functioning group and we have not heard recently from Denmark, from IMBAS in Germany or from Belgium (Dutch group to check).

- Speaking Tours:

  Italy, Japan and Holland reported that these had been very effective last year. Italy has scheduled one for August/September this year and Japan for October/November.

13. IPU:

The Inter Parliamentary Union next twice-yearly meeting is this month. Lobbying necessary - Indonesia has been very successful in damping-down the issue here in recent years.

14. Other Business:

Jan Erik asked about a comprehensive list of resources on East Timor (books, slides, videos etc) - none in existence at present but difficult to put together (see 15 below).

15. Venue for next year:

Italy proposed and Sandro said that it should be possible.

Organizational points for next year:

- notice needs to go out to groups at least 3 months before.
- starting on the Friday was generally agreed useful because it gives more time.
  a) groups should bring to the meeting a list of all the resources on East Timor that they have.

Minutes written up by Billy Williams